

ULTRAVIOLET WATER TREATMENT SYSTEM

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The invention relates generally to water treatment systems. More particularly, the invention relates to water treatment systems employing ultraviolet light.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] With ultraviolet light, light and temperature can be precisely controlled to create an atmosphere for sterilization and purification of water. Of all the different characteristics of ultraviolet light, selection of a proper wavelength for use is generally most important. Natural light is an optimum light in the area of ultraviolet as in sunlight, however, in many areas an artificial supplement of ultraviolet light in a higher range may be realized.

[0003] Natural light and artificial light have different wavelengths or spectral qualities. There are many different types of artificial light depending on the light source used and the characteristics. The spectral characteristics can be altered or enhanced by the use of filters, coating or other means. Normally, the violet-blue segments of the spectrum are most important for sterilization and purification production.

[0004] A plethora of lighting systems for ultraviolet sterilization and purification are currently in use such as the one described in Canadian Patent No. 2,373,673, entitled Flow Cytometer and Ultraviolet Disinfecting Systems which was published on August 27, 2002. In almost all cases, a high amount of light output results in considerable heat generated near the source and transferred into the water. As required, the light source can be placed close to the treated area. Significant temperature change develops near the water which can produce dangerous results. Light sources that have been used in the past include fluorescent ultraviolet lighting, high or low pressure lights and a variety of others.

[0005] Often times, water lighting systems must deal with excessive heat produced by existing technologies. Water lighting systems allow the placing of light sources close to the treatment area. The drawback is the heat build up around the light in conjunction with electricity is detrimental. This light intensity is very high to ensure the maximum rate of sterilization and purification will occur. The water jacket enclosure surrounds the bulb and

absorbs a percentage of ultraviolet light to the treatment area. The result is a reduction of light output through the surface.

[0006] Many disadvantages of the current systems are heat output, complexity, cost and difficulty of maintenance operations. Heat values with electricity are the most problematic.

[0007] It is, therefore, desirable to provide a water treatment system which overcomes some of the disadvantages of the prior art.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0008] It is an object of the invention to obviate or mitigate at least one disadvantage of previous water treatment systems.

[0009] In a first aspect, the present invention provides an ultraviolet water treatment system comprising a water chamber having a water intake for untreated water to enter the chamber, and a water outlet for water to leave the chamber; an ultraviolet light source; and a fibre optic rod having a distributing end and a receiving end, wherein the receiving end is located to receive a focused ultraviolet light from the light source and convey the light through the rod and out the distributing end into the chamber to treat the water.

[0010] . The UV water treatment system is directed at being installed in existing water plumbing in houses, cottages etc... where water needs to be treated/sterilized before use.

[0011] Other aspects and features of the invention will become apparent to those ordinarily skilled in the art upon review of the following description of specific embodiments of the invention in conjunction with the accompanying figures.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] Embodiments of the invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the attached Figures, wherein:

Fig. 1 is a schematic view of a water system;

Fig. 2 is a perspective view of a first embodiment of a water treatment system;

Fig. 3 is a sectional view of the water treatment system of Fig. 2;

Fig. 4 is a sectional view of a fibre optic rod connected to a water treatment

chamber in accordance with the water treatment system of Fig. 2;

Figs. 5a and 5b are views of an ultraviolet (UV) source for use in the water treatment system; and

Figs. 6a, 6b and 6c are views of a second embodiment of the fibre optic rod of Fig 4.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0013] Generally, the invention provides an ultraviolet water treatment system for treating water for personal use.

[0014] Turning to Figure 1, a schematic diagram of an ultraviolet water treatment system **10** installed in a water flow system is shown. The water flow system **1** comprises a water input (in which untreated water enters) which is connected to a shutoff valve **2** via a bypass **T 3**. The bypass **T 3** is connected to a solenoid valve **4** which is connected to the water treatment system **10**. The water treatment system **10** is then connected to a second shutoff valve **5** via a pressure/flow switch **6**. The second shutoff valve **5** is connected to a second bypass **T 7** which allows the treated water to be transferred to a requesting tap in the water system. The two bypass **Ts 3** and **7** are connected to each other by a bypass valve and line **8**. A power supply **9** is also connected to the UV water treatment system **10**, the solenoid valve **4** and the pressure/flow switch **6**.

[0015] Turning to Figure 2, a perspective view of the ultraviolet water treatment system is shown. The water treatment system **10** generally comprises a water treatment section **12**, a lamp housing section **14** and a ventilation section **16**.

[0016] The water treatment section **12** comprises a water treatment chamber **18** preferably manufactured from stainless steel, connected to a water intake **20** and a water outlet **22**. The water intake **20** and the water outlet **22** are both channel milled into the water treatment chamber **18**. The water treatment section **14** also comprises a cap **24** which is removable to facilitate cleaning of the water treatment chamber **18**. The cap **24** is screwably attached to the water treatment chamber **18** for easy removal/replacement.

[0017] The lamp housing section **14** comprises a body section **26** (having a set of ventilation vents **28** on opposite sides) and a cover **30** atop which the ventilation section **16** sits. The cover **30** may be removed from the top of the lamp body section **26** in order to

repair any parts which are housed by the lamp housing section **14**. These parts will be described in more detail below.

[0018] The ventilation section **16** houses a forced air ventilation fan **32** which is used to cool the inside of the lamp housing section **14** when the water treatment system **10** is in use. In general, the ventilation fan **32** is integrated into the top cover and is not removable on it's own.

[0019] Turning to Figure 3, a sectional view of a first embodiment of the ultraviolet (UV) water treatment system **10** is shown. When installed, the water intake **20** and the water outlet **22** are generally attached, via their connectors **34**, to standard plumbing parts in the water system. The cap **24** preferably has a polished reflective surface on its internal surface **36** facing the water treatment chamber **18** in order to assist in sterilization of the water. The internal surface **36** is preferably concave with a radius ground into it.

[0020] The lamp housing section **14** houses a UV source **38** comprising a UV lamp **39** for providing the necessary UV light to sterilize the water, a reflector **40**, preferably a spun aluminium reflector which is used to focus the UV light and a lamp socket **42**. The reflector may also be a dichroic ellipsoidal reflector. If any part of the UV source **38** breaks down, the entire UV source **38** is preferably replaced in order to maintain positional relationship between the UV lamp **39** and that reflector **40**. The lamp socket **42** is connected via wiring **44** to a power supply connector **46** for providing power to the lamp **39**. The power supply connector **46** is also connected by wiring **48** to the forced air ventilation fan **32** in the ventilation section **16**. As will be understood by one skilled in the art, the power supply connector **46** is connected to the power supply **9**.

[0021] At one end of the lamp housing body section **26** (near the water treatment chamber **18**) is a UV conducting fibre optic rod **50**, which, in the present embodiment, is made of quartz. The fibre optic rod **50** provides a connection between the water treatment section **12** and the lamp housing section **14** as will be described in more detail below with respect to Figure 3. As can be seen, the optic rod **50** is preferably screwed into the water treatment chamber **18** with O-ring **52** to assist in sealing the connection. The O-ring **52** is preferably groove machined into the water treatment chamber **18** so that the rod **50** may be screwed down until the O-ring **52** is compressed thereby accurately locating the fibre optic rod **50** at a predetermined distance from the cap **24**.

[0022] Located near the ventilation vents **28** are a pair of light traps **54** which assist in covering the vents **28** so that the UV light from the UV lamp **34** does not escape the lamp housing body **26**, but is focused towards the fibre optic rod **50**, during the sterilization process. As described above, the reflector **40** also assists in focussing the UV light towards the fibre optic rod **50** in order to provide maximum UV light to the rod **50** and therefore the sterilization process, as illustrated by the arrows **51**, during the sterilization process.

[0023] The arrows **51** provide a schematic ray diagram showing various paths taken by the UV light from the lamp and the reflector during the sterilization process. After the UV lamp is powered on, the UV light rays reflect off the reflector towards the second optical end of the fibre optic rod. The UV light rays then travel from the second optical end to the first optical end via the middle section of the rod. The resultants rays fill up the lens at the first optical end which then transfers the UV rays into the water treatment chamber whereby the water is treated by the UV rays and sterilized.

[0024] Turning to Figure 4, a more detailed schematic of the connection between the first embodiment of the fibre optic rod **50** and the water treatment chamber **18** is shown.

[0025] The fibre optic rod **50** comprises a first optical end **56** where an optical lens is ground into the fibre optic rod and covered with an infra-red (IR) reflective coating and a rounded second optical end **58** made from quartz. The quartz used in the second optical end **58** is preferably a high grade UV transmitting quartz such as surpasil quartz. Furthermore, the first optical end **56** may also be manufactured out of suprasil quartz. The second optical end collects UV light from the UV lamp **49** and the reflector **40** and concentrates it for transmission into the water chamber.

[0026] The optical lens used in the first optical end **56** may also be quartz. A middle section **60** of the rod **50**, between the two optical ends **56** and **58**, is manufactured out of quartz which causes the fibre optic rod **50** to be a quartz rod.

[0027] The optical ends and the middle section are held in place by a cylindrical sleeve **61**, preferably manufactured out of stainless steel.

[0028] In an alternative embodiment, the rod **50** may be tapered in order to fit and seal in the opening between the lamp housing body section **26** and the water treatment

chamber **18** rather than being screwed in. In this manner, the rod **50** is adhesively bonded to the chamber **18**.

[0029] An O-ring **62** is also located between the cap **24** and the water treatment chamber **18** to seal the connection between the cap **24** and the chamber **18** so that no water may escape from the chamber before, during and after the sterilization process.

[0030] Turning to Figures 5a and 5b, a perspective view and a front view of the UV source **38** are shown. As can be seen in Figure 5a, the UV lamp **39** is located centrally within the dichroic reflector **40**. The position of the lamp **39** with respect to the reflector **40** is quite important since the dichroic reflector is used to reflect/focus the UV light directly onto the second optical end **58** of the fibre optic rod **50**. If the lamp **39** is not centrally located, the impact of the focussed light is lessened. Therefore, when either the reflector **40** or UV lamp **39** needs to be replaced, in order to maintain the spatial relationship between the lamp **39** and the reflector **40**, the entire UV source **38** is replaced and the wiring (not shown) is plugged into the lamp socket **42** of the new UV source.

[0031] Turning to Figures 6a, 6b and 6c, schematic views of a second embodiment of the fibre optic rod **100** are shown. As with the fibre optic rod described with respect to Figure 4, the fibre optic rod **100** comprises a first optical end **102** and a second optical end **104** connected together by a middle section **106**. As with the first embodiment, the first optical end **102**, the second optical end **104** and the middle section **106** are housed in a stainless steel sleeve **108**. In this embodiment, the middle section **106** comprises an index matching fluid which has optical qualities which are similar to quartz. In one embodiment, this index matching fluid is de-ionized water such that even if some of the index matching fluid was to escape or leak from the rod **100**, there are little or no health risks associated with the de-ionized water which provides further health benefits for using the water treatment system. The index matching fluid transmits and converges the UV light rays from the lamp **39** and the reflector **40** as if the rod was an entirely solid quartz optical rod as described above.

[0032] There is also an air ballast **110** connected to the middle section **106** of the rod **100**. The air ballast **110** is generally used to connect to a pump for insertion of the index matching fluid into the middle section **106**. The air ballast **110** also allows for expansion of the index matching fluid during the sterilization process since the fluid generally expands when subjected to heat such as from the UV light. Therefore, the air ballast **110** protects the

fibre optic rod from exploding due to the increased pressure in the liquid during the sterilization process.

[0033] As with the first embodiment, the fibre optic rod **100** is screwed into the water treatment chamber **18** with the air ballast being located within the lamp housing body. Due to the presence of the air ballast, the level of index matching fluid in the middle section **106** of the rod **100** does not change since the amount of fluid which changes to gas during the sterilization process returns to a liquid form once the UV light is powered off. Therefore, in general, once the fibre optic rod has been installed in the water treatment system **10** there is little or no requirement to pump extra index matching fluid into the rod. The insertion of the index matching fluid takes place before the rod is connected with the water treatment chamber **18**.

[0034] Furthermore, due to a requirement that the air ballast **108** is required to be in a vertical position during use, in this embodiment of the water treatment system **10** the system is installed in the water system with the axis of the water intake, the water treatment chamber and the water outlet forming a line perpendicular to the ground.

[0035] In operation, the optic rod gathers the UV light in its second optical end and then conveys this light to the water while also acting to absorb/deflect infra-red rays from being transmitted into the water.

[0036] In one embodiment of operation, seen as an always-on embodiment, the water treatment system **10** is initially powered up by connecting the power supply connector **46** to the power supply **9**. This provides power to the treatment system **10** allowing for the forced air ventilation fan **32** to operate along with the UV lamp **39**. The forced air ventilation fan **32** operates to cool the inside of the lamp housing body **26** of the lamp housing section **14** since there is a high amount of heat generated by the UV lamp **39** during the sterilization process by drawing in atmospheric air through the ventilation slots **28** and up through the body section **14** to the fan section where the air exits out at the top of the water treatment system **10** thereby passing the UV lamp and the socket.

[0037] After the treatment system **10** is powered up, the UV lamp **39** also turns on. The UV light generated by the UV lamp **39** is then focussed by the reflector **40** at the second optical end **58** of the fibre optic rod **50**. The UV light is also trapped in the lamp housing body section **26** via the light traps **54** located in front of the ventilation vents **28** and directed

at the second optical end **58**. The UV light is focussed at the second optical end **58** of the fibre optic rod **50** which then conveys the light through the middle section **60** to the first optical end **56** near the water treatment chamber **18**. The middle section, either the solid quartz rod or the index matching fluid act to reduce the heat being transmitted to the water treatment chamber from the UV lamp.

[0038] While the UV light heats up the fibre optic rod **50**, untreated water travels into the water treatment chamber **18** via the water intake **20** to the water treatment chamber **18** where it is subjected to the UV light emitted by the first optical end of the fibre optic rod **50** which sterilizes the untreated water. In some cases, the water in the water treatment chamber may also contact the first optical end **56** of the fibre optic rod **50** without affecting the sterilization process. The treated water then travels out of the water treatment chamber **18** via the water outlet **22** where the water is then transferred for use.

[0039] In another embodiment of operation, seen as an on-demand embodiment, the UV source and the fan are initially unpowered. Once a flow sensor, located in the water outlet **22**, senses a request for treated water (i.e. a tap opening), a signal is sent to a processor which causes a gate, located between the water intake **20** and the water treatment chamber **18** to close in order to prevent further untreated water from entering the chamber and holds this water in the water intake **20**. The processor then sends a signal to power up the ventilation fan **32** and the UV source **38**. Once the fan and the source have been powered up (after a slight delay), a signal is sent to the gate to open allowing the untreated water to flow from the water intake **20** to the chamber **18** to be treated. After the water is treated, the water travels from the water outlet to the tap requesting the treated water. Once the tap is closed, the flow sensor senses this and sends a signal to the processor to power down the UV source and the ventilation fan **32** and close the gate once again.

[0040] One advantage of the water treatment system **10** is that the first embodiment (with a fibre optic rod manufactured entirely from quartz) may be installed either horizontally or vertically in the water system **1**. However, with the second embodiment of the water treatment system having the middle section of the fibre optic rod comprising an index matching fluid, the water treatment system must be installed with the axis of the water intake, water treatment chamber and the water outlet in a vertical position.

[0041] The above-described embodiments of the present invention are intended to be examples only. Alterations, modifications and variations may be effected to the particular embodiments by those of skill in the art without departing from the scope of the invention, which is defined solely by the claims appended hereto.